

1Frank Allan Brewer
and
Lynn Brewer

Tape 341

Kathi Irving (KI): This is Kathi Irving. Today is 28 May 2003. I'm with Frank Allan and Lynn Brewer. Allan, please tell me when you were born and who your parents were.

Allan: I was born on 20 April 1910. My parents was Frank and Edith Brewer.

KI: Where were you born?

Allan: Saratoga, Wyoming. My home at that time was out where I lived most all my life, on Bitter Creek Ranch at Sweetwater, McCook Ridge and Salt Wash.

KI: How old were you when you first moved to the ranch?

Allan: I was eight years old. I spent my last year in ? in grade school, third grade, I think.

KI: Did your dad homestead the land for the ranch?

Allan: He homesteaded it, yes.

KI: So, that would have been about 1918?

Allan: It was 1918 when they bought that balanced Brewer Rock, Balanced Rock now, down on Bitter Creek.

KI: Is that still there?

Allan: Yes, that rock is as big as heck there.

KI: Tell me what it was like when you moved there, when you were just eight years old. Did you have to help build the house?

Allan: No, we bought the house and the rock and everything from Henry Lee.

KI: So, he had already built the house?

Allan: No, my dad, they got the first four logs.

KI: So, it was a log cabin?

Lynn: Yes. Dad, if I remember right they've got pictures holding you out there in front of one of those houses when you was real little, so you was there before you was eight years old. I can't remember. You was probably there once you was a year old, I think.

Allan: But, I went to school.

Lynn: I know. She was wondering when you went to the Book Cliffs.

Allan: I went to the Book Cliffs, south canyon. We lived in that house at South Canyon when I was...

KI: Were you just a tiny boy?

Allan: I was pretty small.

Lynn: He was borned up there, but I think he was down there when he was just a baby.

KI: Then you went back to Fruita for school for a while? Tell me what your house looked like, the first house that you had there.

Allan: It was a two-room house and it had the attic, but the attic wasn't finished up. I had a little hideout den up in there where I'd go up and play my old phonograph sometimes.

KI: Was it a crank one?

Allan: Yeah, an Edison. It took cylinder records about that big around. I had another phonograph later on that was just like it.

KI: You were the oldest child, weren't you?

Allan: No, I had a sister four years older than me.

KI: Did they have all the children sleep in one bedroom? Where did you sleep in that cabin?

Allan: At first we slept, in that new one Dad built, there had to be a big old box back there under a ? Francis and Jack slept in that. They was just little kids.

KI: That was inside the house, though, right? They didn't make the boys sleep out in the barn?

Allan: The barn was just outdoors.

KI: I've read some stories of people who kept the girls in the house and all the boys had to sleep outside in boarded-up tents or whatever. So, I wondered if it was that way for you, too.

Did your mother like to be on the ranch?

Allan: Yes, she did, very much.

KI: Where was she raised?

Allan: Saratoga, Wyoming.

KI: So, she was kind of a frontier woman, too?

Allan: Just as frontier as they make them.

KI: Lynn, do you remember your grandmother?

Lynn: No.

KI: She had died?

Lynn: Yes.

KI: Tell me who your brothers and sisters were. You had a sister who was older than you. What was her name?

Allan: Ethel.

KI: Then you were next.

Allan: About four years later, yes.

KI: Who came after you?

Allan: Oh, Frances.

KI: Frances was a girl?

Allan: Yes.

KI: Who was number four?

Allan: Jack.

KI: And were there five children?

Allan: And Dick.

KI: So, two girls and three boys.

Allan: Yes.

KI: You told me you went to Fruita to go to school. So, didn't you eventually get a school on your ranch?

Allan: We did.

KI: Do you remember who your teacher was? Was it a woman or a man?

Allan: Her name was Pearl Schaffer. She was a woman.

KI: She wasn't married?

Allan: No.

KI: Because they didn't let women be married, did they, and teach school. Doesn't happen like that now. How many years of school did you go to?

Allan: Nine.

KI: With Pearl in that school there?

Allan: No. Dad shipped me out to California to go to school my first year of junior high school.

KI: Who did you stay with there?

Allan: My dad's parents.

KI: Did you like that or did you want to come home?

Allan: I worked all the time. Did garden work for folks around town. When I got ready to go home, Dad wrote me a letter and told me about the broncs he had in there and the broncs he had and he was feeding them all hay, and he needed a bronco buster. So, I said, "I'm going bronco-busting!"

KI: Had you ever done that before?

Allan: Well, a couple before.

KI: Tell me what it was like to be a bronc buster.

Allan: Well, the night I got home, Dad went in there with a roan horse. It was my horse. It was the fightingest rascal, just a mean fight. I got on him and, doggone, he just about bucked the daylights out of me. But I'd done nothing all my life but ride.

KI: How long did it take you to break the first one?

Allan: Just about a month. I rode him around the corral and let him buck.

Lynn: He did learn to be a pretty good bronc rider when he was real young.

KI: Where did these horses come from that you had to break?

Lynn: They raised a lot of horses, but they caught a lot of wild horses out there, too. They made good saddle horses.

Allan: That first one that I was riding was a wild horse we'd caught. Because it was such a small horse, I was the only one that could ride him.

KI: You were the only one who *dared* to ride him, huh?

Allan: He bucked off a lot of men.

KI: How big were the herds your dad took care of? There were both cattle and horses? Or did you just use the horses to take care of the cattle?

Lynn: The horses was there to take care of the cattle. They had to have a lot of them.

KI: Why is that?

Lynn: Well, you can't ride the same horse every day that hard. They just get too tired. Dad said they had to ride a different horse every third day.

KI: Do you remember how big the herd of cattle was that you were taking care of?

Lynn: Dad, it seems to me like you told me, at one time, after you guys got established, you run nine hundred head out there.

Allan: I gathered the last of our cattle. I had about four hundred and twenty head. After we divided them.

KI: That would have been about nine hundred.

Allan: Boy, the bank counted them!

KI: Tell me about sheep. Did you like those sheep running out in there?

Allan: When I was fifteen, shall I tell this?

Lynn: You might have to edit it.

Allan: When I was fifteen, Dad gave my brother-in-law, Ethel was married, he let us take about six head of milk cows, cows that was broke to milk, down at White River where a man named Anderson was lambing out a herd a sheep. They had an awful lot of dogie lambs. We raised

seventy-five head of lambs. We took them up to Bitter Creek and turned them over to an old sheepherder named Frank Smith to herd them for us. He just put them in his herd.

After that, then I bought a hundred head after we sold some of the wool and lambs and stuff. I had enough to buy a hundred from Walt Squires.

KI: So, you ran both sheep and cattle?

Allan: Yes, we had a few to eat, but we didn't keep them on our range or anything. We had them with ? until we found us [some land].

KI: That was very out of the ordinary to run both sheep and cattle, wasn't it?

Lynn: That wasn't the story I thought. The one I was thinking of they pushed the sheepherders out.

Allan: Go ahead and tell it.

Lynn: No, I don't know all the story.

KI: I've heard a lot about the conflict between the cattlemen and the sheepmen.

Allan: We had plenty out there. We bought the Smiths' ranch and another place called Sawmill up above Dragon. We didn't have any sheep on our ranch anytime outside of that seventy-five head of dogie lambs.

KI: Did you prefer the cattle to the sheep?

Allan: Very much. I also trapped coyotes and bobcats and muskrats.

Lynn: I think the sheep he really liked was that that was fried good.

KI: You ate those sheep, huh?

Allan: Oh, yeah.

KI: Where you ever in any rodeos?

Allan: Yes.

KI: What did you do in the rodeo?

Allan: Fell off the racetrack.

KI: You did that at a rodeo?

Allan: At a racetrack here in Vernal.

KI: Where was the racetrack?

Allan: At the fairgrounds here in Vernal. We were at that rodeo, but what I was in there for was to ride calves, big old calves. I done a good job of that.

Lynn: Let's see, that picture we've got of your first rodeo, you were either eight or ten and you was riding one.

Allan: I was eleven.

KI: That was your first rodeo in Vernal?

Allan: Yes. The second one, anyplace, I can't really remember it. Jake Stanford and I, we bought our ranch on Sweetwater.

Lynn: Dad, didn't you and Jack used to come in and ride saddle broncs in the rodeo a little bit? I know Jack did.

Allan: I never rode anything but calves and mules, a couple of mules.

Lynn: I have a lot of pictures of you riding bucking horses out to the ranch.

KI: That was what I was wondering, too, if you had done bronc riding for the rodeo.

Allan: I could take care of my horses, but I couldn't hardly ride with my saddle. I could put that bullring on the surcingle.

KI: What is that? I don't quite understand what that is.

Lynn: That's bareback. You've been to the rodeos and seen them ride bareback. That's what that surcingle is.

KI: I'm not a rodeo girl, I'm sorry, Allan. You have to explain this stuff to me! Did you ever do any roping?

Allan: Yes. I've never roped in a rodeo, not much.

Lynn: Out at the ranch in the brush and rocks and stuff, he was a good roper. He roped lots and lots of wild horses. He could catch them horses.

KI: How did the wild horses get there?

Allan: That's a whole book by itself. [Background noise obscures his voice briefly.] You could tell his wild horses was from his old Cortez stock. They had a short vertebrae.

Lynn: Cortez, the Spanish man.

KI: Oh, so long ago. They were around here for hundreds of years before you guys started riding them.

Allan: Oh, thousands, millions!

KI: Well, horses could have been, Cortez was a little bit later than that.

Allan: Well, they were wild horses.

Lynn: I guess Dad's talking about the number of horses, not the number of years.

KI: There were lots and lots of horses, huh?

Allan: Yeah, it's a big country. See, our cattle run all the way from Mack, Colorado, to ?.

KI: Did you ever have any free time out there on the ranch? Time when you just got to play and things like that.

Allan: Free time? Any time we wanted to. Saddle our best horses and go out. Dad would go along with us.

KI: That was play time?

Allan: That was play time. He never treated any of us better than the other.

KI: Your dad, did he grow up on a ranch before he came out here?

Allan: All of us did. He sold his ranch in Wyoming and went to Canada and planted grain, wheat. Then he come back to California. He got rich enough to retire.

KI: Did he make his money from the wheat?

Lynn: I think so.

KI: So, then he came down here to homestead?

Lynn: I don't think he got rich.

KI: But he changed his mind about what he wanted to do?

Allan: He was old enough to retire and he had enough money to do it.

Lynn: That was after he had the ranch out here for a long time, though, Dad. He sold his part out so he could retire, I think.

Allan: Maybe you're talking about your granddad and I'm talking about mine.

Lynn: We're talking about *your* dad.

Allan: My dad bought a lot of ground in California and there were good times.

KI: Using the money from the property was a good way for him to retire. Can you tell me about any pet animals you had when you were a little boy? Did you have dogs or a wolf or anything?

Allan: My dad had a bobcat when I was just little kid. I remember that old bobcat would sit out there on a cedar stump, it was sawed off. That bobcat sat up on top of that stump.

KI: Lynn, have you ever heard stories about the bobcat?

Lynn: Oh, yeah.

KI: How big did it get to be? Was it a big full grown animal?

Allan: Some of them can get pretty big, others are about as big as a dog. This one was about as big as a dog.

KI: How did you come by that bobcat? Did you find it as a pup?

Allan: I suppose I found it in a trap. It wasn't in the trap very long.

KI: I also saw a picture of a bear. What was that about?

Lynn: Tell her about Fibber McGee and Molly.

Allan: ? and I treed a couple of bear cubs and took them home. They found out that cow milk was just as good as bear milk. They got real gentle and nice. We had another one.

KI: What happened to the bear? How long did it live?

Allan: I don't know too much about that. We sold them to an outfit. I don't know just what they did do with them.

KI: Tell me about the wolf cub.

Allan: Well, the one that we had was just like a dog. It was just as gentle as could be, the only wolf that we had.

KI: Do you remember what you named it?

Allan: Jerry McCarty. He was named after a railroader.

KI: I guess you used to ride on the Uintah Railroad once in a while? Have you been on the narrow gauge railroad?

Allan: Oh, yes. Yes, I've been on it a lot. If we had to go town to the doctor or something, we'd get on a horse and go to Dragon, and put your horse in the feed corral and ride down to Uintah down to Mack, take a stage on out to Grand Junction.

KI: Did you go to Grand Junction more than you came in to Vernal?

Allan: No, but we used to sell, a man named Vickery had a feed corral there and he'd feed that **meat/wheat?** pulp. We trailed our cattle to Grand Junction at **Flattop??**, across the river, through there and again at Grand Junction and put them in the feed corral, which was built where it had access to Green River, right up there.

KI: Tell me, what happens when you raise cattle? How long do you keep them before you sell?

Lynn: Cows have the calves in the spring and then usually about October, the calves are big enough to wean, they'll be about, well, nowadays it's five hundred to six hundred pounds. But back then with that open range, it would be more like one hundred, one hundred and fifty pounds. Then they would take them to Mack and sell them.

KI: Just after they were weaned.

Lynn: Now, back a long time ago, they might have kept them until they were yearlings and took them over there.

Allan: It wasn't unusual back in my younger trailing days that you'd have five or six in a load. You don't find them all in one year.

KI: I guess that's true on the open range. How did you choose which ones you used to breed? Were they all males that you sold?

Lynn: Normally, you'd sell the males and they'd keep just whatever heifers they wanted to keep, then sell the rest, too.

KI: What kind of money did you get out of a cow when you sold it on the hoof?

Allan: There'd be a lot of difference. The bigger and older steers that I sold brought a little less, sometimes, but there was no market part of the time.

KI: I imagine some years could be good and some not so good. What happened during the Depression years in the 1930s?

Allan: We sold some of them for, I think it was eleven cents a pound they paid for them.

KI: I've read about the government program during the Depression when they made the ranchers kill the animals. The government said, "We're going to come in and we'll pay you for these animals, but we're going to kill them." Did that happen to you?

Allan: I don't think so.

Lynn: Now, Dad, you told me one year you had to kill a lot of cows and you skinned them and sold the hides.

Allan: Well, we had our choice of the ones we sold.

KI: Why would you sell the hides?

Lynn: You'd get an extra fifty cents or a dollar out of them. Just get some money out of them.

KI: Do you remember having a real bad drought?

Allan: That was during the drought when we sold them that cheap. Any [animal] we thought didn't have too good a chance, that was the one we sold.

KI: Did you put any land into hay?

Allan: No.

KI: Totally open range?

Lynn: It was all open range. Keep them in the high country during the summer and the low country in the winter. They did put up just a little bit of hay for cows that were sick and stuff like that later on. The early years they probably didn't.

KI: You were very dependent on the weather, weren't you? You needed to have the rain for the feed?

Allan: Oh, yes. They were turned loose, no fences.

KI: What happened if you had a really bad winter?

Allan: Lost a lot of stock.

KI: Was it also open range grazing during the winter?

Lynn: Yeah, you bring them off the top of the mountain. Sometimes you'd bring them down into what they called the desert, the other side of the mountain. The snow wouldn't be very deep down there, but there's no feed.

KI: Would you lose them to starvation? Do you remember a year like that?

Allan: Oh, yes. Them cows down there were eating cactus. I don't see how in the world they could do it. They were going to sell a lot of them old cactus-eating cows. But then it was the

same out there around Dragon. Down there below Dragon you see these cactus patches and I've seen some of those cows out there eating cactus.

KI: I guess you'll do anything when you're starving to death. Tell me what went on over there on your ranch. Did the neighbors ever get together and all have a dance?

Allan: We'd go to Willow Creek to a dance or there were dances in Dragon.

KI: Do you remember who used to play at those dances?

Allan: No.

KI: That's okay. Did they have a fiddle?

Allan: They had a player piano. I was thinking how I used to go in there and we'd have a box supper a lot of times. I'd go in there and buy her a box supper and sit beside her on that player piano.

KI: I bet that was fun.

Allan: I thought it was.

KI: What did Dragon look like? What was there?

Allan: Oh, just another little old mining town. I don't know how many houses were there.

KI: Didn't Hen Lee have a store there?

Allan: No, his store was back up Evacuation Creek, up above Dragon.

KI: Was there a schoolhouse?

Allan: There was a school house in Dragon, yes.

KI: Is that where they had the dances?

Allan: Yes. Do you know the Finicums?

KI: Yes, I do.

Allan: I know that they had a picture show, and I think they used that for a dance hall.

KI: I'll bet those were good times.

Allan: Sure.

KI: When did you take over the ranch by yourself, or was it you and a brother?

Allan: Dad sold his half of it to Harry H??.

Lynn: Didn't Granddad sell out to you? I think you bought Granddad's out.

Allan: No, Harry bought your granddad's.

Lynn: Didn't you buy Jack's part when he went down on Willow Creek?

Allan: Yeah.

Lynn: What about Dick's?

Allan: Dick was gone.

Lynn: I know. Dick got killed, but I thought you bought his part out from Elva.

Allan: I did.

KI: Didn't they split the ranch up among all the children?

Lynn: Well, they all homesteaded and had their own. Uncle Dick got killed out there and Dad bought his part from his wife. He bought Jack out and I thought he bought out Granddad, too.

Allan: I just bought Jack. Harry got Granddad's and I got what Dick had left.

KI: About how many acres was it that you ran by yourself?

Allan: At the end, after Dad was out, I had all the old ground that we used to have.

KI: Lynn, do you know?

Lynn: I don't know, but it was a big chunk of ground.

KI: One of the things I read said that your dad had between three and four thousand acres, that's why I asked. Is that about right?

Lynn: I would think it's more than that. By the time Dad had all of it put together, why it was big.

Allan: I had the ? Stanford Ranch, the Johnny Trujillo Ranch, and others.

KI: They were all different parcels and you put them together to make one ranch?

Lynn: Yes. That's why I'm thinking he ran nine hundred head because he bought all these other places and put them together.

KI: How long were you out there? Do you remember when you finished ranching and decided to retire?

Lynn: After Dad sold out, he went back out there and run that ranch for **Clive Sprouse and Shorty Hatch??**, and later went over and worked for **Bauman and Groppy???** over on Willow Creek. They were from Arizona and they bought another place. But he spent the last twenty years up here on the Diamond Mountain Cattlemen's Association. He run that for Hugh Colton and them guys for almost twenty years.

KI: The land that your dad had, you don't have the same land anymore?

Lynn: No.

KI: Where is your ranch?

Lynn: I've just got a little place out here in Davis Ward. It's a big backyard, forty acres. I think three tough winters put him out of business. He just kind of lost it.

KI: When would that have been?

Lynn: What was them three real bad winters you had out there when you lost the ranch? It would have had to been in the '50s. What year did you sell out to Clive Sprouse?

Allan: I was going to ask *you* that!

KI: Was it after the Second World War, a few years?

Lynn: Yeah, he served in the war and come back and run that ranch for a long time after that.

KI: So, would it have been in the late '50s maybe?

Lynn: I think so.

KI: You served in Second World War?

Allan: Yes.

KI: What branch of the service?

Allan: In the Army.

KI: Where were you?

Allan: I was out there buying horses for the Army.

KI: That's interesting. Even in the 1940s they were buying horses for the Army.

Lynn: He spent quite a lot of time in the Aleutian Islands, then they brought him back to Georgia to guard German prisoners in Georgia for a long time.

KI: What did you do in the Aleutians? Were you a guard? [The US was] afraid the Japanese were going to come and land in the Aleutians during the war.

Allan: Yes, that's what we were there for.

KI: So, you didn't go to Europe or the South Pacific when you were in the Army.

Lynn: Just the Aleutians and Georgia.

KI: Okay. Let me just ask you a couple more questions. When you were out on the ranch, what kind of food did you like to eat?

Allan: Potatoes and deer meat!

KI: Deer meat? You didn't eat any of your beef?

Allan: Not much.

KI: Did you go hunting then?

Allan: Oh, yes. I had an old German Luger, it's a handgun about this long. I could step off the [back porch] and pop one. Just go down on my knee.

KI: There were a lot of them out there?

Lynn: There were lots of deer then.

KI: Did you not eat beef because you didn't want to eat up the profits?

Lynn: You know, they didn't have any refrigeration out there and deer meat, you can hang it out at night and during the daytime, keep the sun off them, and you can eat one of them before it would spoil.

KI: Did you eat some of those bum lambs?

Allan: Nope, never ate one. There was an old Mexican out there that had goats. He traded us some potatoes for an old bum lamb.

Lynn: That was pretty well it. When I was out there with him, you didn't ever have to ask what was for supper or for breakfast. Breakfast was eggs, pancakes and deer meat. At noon you had your pancake with some deer meat in, that was your sandwich. And at night it was fried taters and deer meat, and it never changed. I think that's why I'm so tall!

Allan: I remember his mother saying, "What do we want to have for dinner, Lynn?" And he said, "Taters and gig."

Lynn: You know, when Dad would go to town, which was not very often, he'd about always bring some chicken or something back. Man, that was just like Christmas!

KI: You didn't even raise chickens just around the yard?

Lynn: We had chickens for the eggs.

KI: Only for the eggs. That was a big deal to have something fresh. Did you have fresh produce? Did you have a garden where you raised carrots and the potatoes?

Allan: I raised a garden everywhere I went that I could get a piece of ground plowed up.

Lynn: He always raised a good garden.

KI: Did you raise much fruit then?

Lynn: Nope.

KI: There wouldn't be much out there, would there?

Lynn: There was not much out there.

KI: Do you like the food they feed you here? You don't get much venison here, do you?

Allan: No, we certainly don't get a lot of venison. One time my niece was here from Nevada and I brought in a poached deer, a nice big buck that I poached. She asked where I was getting it. I said, "Oh, I was just out there and my gun went off!"

KI: So, living on the ranch was a good life for you, was it?

Allan: You bet it was. The very best life that anybody could have. Ranching was the best part of my life.

KI: He must have been in his 60s or 70s when he stopped ranching for other people.

Lynn: I think he was closer to 80, his late 70s, I think.

KI: It was a good long time. Can you think of any stories you'd like to tell me?

Allan: Not right now.

KI: Well, I think it's about time we let you rest.

Allan: I'm all right. I'm just an old rascal. Lynn, I caught a wild horse for you. You'd go around all over, around cedar trees.

Lynn: He was about the same size as me. A little wild horse. Had him a lot of years. He got big. I was little and wasn't heavy enough to hurt him any.

Allan: How big did he get?

Lynn: **Windy?? Whitty???** He got up pretty good size. Them wild horses, most of them's not big, but he was pretty good size.

KI: I have another question for you. Do you remember any bootleggers?

Allan: Yeah, I particularly remember them.

KI: Tell me about it.

Allan: Oh, they used to make a lot of good whiskey. Old Bart Owens, Bart Howell.

KI: What did they make the whiskey from?

Allan: Corn, just ground it up.

KI: Do you remember Josie Morris?

Allan: Oh, yes.

KI: Did you ever drink any of her moonshine?

Allan: Oh, yes. I remember that.

KI: She kind of kept that still hidden for a long time, but word got out that she was making moonshine. How did you find out who the person was who had the moonshine? Did all the cowboys just talk to each other?

Allan: Yeah. Henry Lee, he happened to be in to Dragon one day when I was in there, and I said, "Henry, can you haul me out a hundred-pound sack of sugar?"

KI: That was always the key, you know, where the sugar was going. So, did you make it yourself?

Allan: No.

KI: Well, that's pretty funny. I guess you had to give that up. You're not drinking any moonshine in here, are you?

Allan: No, I'm not. I give up drinking.

Lynn: He gave up his drinking quite a few years ago.

KI: Let me ask you one more question. Tell me about your poetry. Not too long ago a man called us at the library and asked how he could get hold of you because he wanted to put one of your poems on a CD. A man from Colorado.

Lynn: There was a man from Oregon who did an interview like you're doing and wanted some of that stuff. I don't know what became of that.

KI: Can you remember any of the poetry that you wrote? Do you want to say one for me?

Allan: Oh, I can't think of the name of it now.
I went into town the other day
Just loafing and whiling the hours away
[The poem continues briefly, but is not intelligible.]

KI: How did you come up with your ideas to write poems?

Allan: Well, my sister wrote poems, most of them are not quite so wild. I thought they were great. Then I started writing them.

KI: We've got information about you being a Legendary Cowboy; they did that in 1998, I think. We've got stories about your father, and I've got something down there in the library that you wrote by hand about the Book Cliffs.

Allan: I got ten or a dozen of those.

KI: Can you think of anything else? Thanks for talking with me. I really appreciate it so much. You're a great guy.